

August 7, 2019

1792 SILVER AND NON-SILVER CENTER CENTS

Responses from the Numismatic Community

John Adams

Numismatic Researcher and Author

“The research team of Robert Rodriguez, Tony Lopez, and Stuart and Maureen Levine have demonstrated the value of skepticism when combined with persistence and creativity. Their research conclusions are compelling in that the silver plug is a fabrication that was inserted after the coin was struck and emitted by the 1792 Mint. It is now up to PCGS to explain why it still includes the Morris among the census of genuine Judd-1 silver center cents.”

Leonard Augsburger

Project Coordinator, Newman Numismatic Portal, Washington University in St. Louis

“Compelling research that demands a response. The Morris silver-center cent is clearly an outlier, and the authors present convincing evidence that the means and motive were available to create a false piece at the time of its 1905 sale, when the Chapman brothers identified it as such.”

Anne E. Bentley

Curator of Art & Artifacts, Massachusetts Historical Society

“In regard to the Morris 1792 Silver-Center Cent, I have read the report Robert Rodriguez, Tony Lopez, Stuart Levine, and Maureen Levine presented and found their argument extremely compelling. I have worked with all four numismatists personally and know them to hold rigorous standards for historical research. They are thorough and meticulous in their approach to an enquiry, which is evident in this report on their findings that the Morris Silver-Center Cent was created by altering an original unplugged coin. I accept their conclusions with confidence in their integrity and impartiality. I especially hope that all third party grading services appreciate this opportunity to right an historical numismatic wrong and support independent research in the field, to the benefit of all.”

Mark Borckardt

Senior Numismatic Cataloger, Heritage Auctions

“Robert Rodriguez and his team, in the spirit of the truth-seeker, Eric P. Newman, prove a century-old observation through careful investigation, experimentation, measurement, and analysis.”

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Sheridan Downey

Professional Numismatic Dealer

"It took a while, but I finally made time to read the 50-page monograph you sent. It was fascinating. And, I hasten to add, time well spent.

"It goes without saying that your, Mr. Lopez' and the Levines' research leads to an inescapable conclusion, one that is in accord with the Chapman brothers' cataloging effort of 1905.

"The attribution error in Pine Tree's 1974 GENA Sale was unfortunate and probably led to the mischief that followed. I'd like to think that Walter Breen erred in haste. PCGS may have done the same. There are times when we see what we expect to see. Breen missed the Chapmans' 1905 commentary and *expected* to see a genuine Judd 1. After all, who would use an exceedingly rare coin to fabricate a supremely rare coin? Your analyses of the cost of fabrication and the comparative values of Judd 1 vs. Judd 2 were a help in dealing with that question.

"The most convincing evidence of fabrication, of course, is the post-striking engraving on the Morris silver plug. The misaligned E in CENT cannot be explained without acknowledging an engraver's role in the process. The peculiar shape of Liberty's curl (on the Morris plug) fits a post-minting chronology.

"I'm certain that Walter Breen would have congratulated you on your work. He and I were neighbors in the early days of my numismatic career and saw one another frequently. (I lived in Oakland, he in an adjoining city, Berkeley, until he died in 1993.) It will be a disappointment if PCGS does not follow suit."

David F. Fanning

Numismatic Bookseller

"The 1792 Silver Center cents have long been appreciated by numismatists as one of the most interesting of the early U.S. pattern coins. Recent work has found that the specimen sold by the Chapman brothers in their 1905 sale of the Charles Morris collection was sold by them with the caveat that it had been altered—that a silver plug had been deliberately inserted into a genuine Non-Silver Center cent and then engraved to appear to be a product of the nascent Mint. This conclusion had been lost over the years, and the Morris example has been treated by generations of numismatists as a genuine Silver Center cent. The research team of Rob Rodriguez et al. has reexamined this specimen and concluded that the Chapman brothers were correct in their assessment of the piece. Careful comparison of photographs of all known Silver Center cents readily shows that the Morris piece is different from all other known Silver Center cents; despite this, the Chapman-Rodriguez conclusion has been resisted by some. For the stability and security of the numismatic market to be sustained, our community must remain willing to examine new findings and correct erroneous conclusions when they are found to have been made. The short-term expense of so doing is far outweighed by the potential consequences of refusing to reconsider the legitimacy of our beliefs."

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David Finkelstein

Professional Coin Dealer and Numismatic Researcher

“The June 2019 study titled 1792 SILVER AND NON-SILVER CENTER CENTS was expertly researched and presented. The evidence provided is compelling, and the conclusions are obvious to me without a shadow of doubt. Based on my 30 years of researching the coins, implementation standards, experiments, minting processes, and the technologies of the first United States Mint in Philadelphia, I agree with the findings of the authors that the *‘Morris 1792 Silver Center Cent was a genuine 1792 Judd-2 pattern cent; however, the plug is a fabrication that was drilled, inserted, and tooled AFTER the coin was produced and emitted by the United States Mint at Philadelphia.’*”

Jim Halperin

Co-Chairman, Heritage Auctions

“Extremely impressive, logical and compelling research—a model for the future of numismatic forensics. I agree with the presentation’s conclusions that the plug is substantially unlike all the others known and therefore, most likely, a non-Mint fabrication.”

Louis Jordan

Associate University Librarian, Academic Services and Collections, University of Notre Dame

“The June 2019 paper “1792 Silver and Non-Silver Center Cents: Further Studies of the Silver Plug contained in the Morris So-Called Silver Centered Cent” published on the Newman Numismatic Portal by Robert Rodriguez, Tony Lopez, Stuart Levine and Maureen Levine, clearly demonstrates the silver plug in the Charles Morris silver centered cent exhibits several unique anomalies that establish it is not contemporary with other known specimens but rather that the silver plug was added to an original 1792 cent at a later date.”

John M. Kleeberg

Numismatic Researcher

“I find the arguments presented in this paper correct and thoroughly convincing. The burden is now on the third party grading service to explain why this coin is still being marketed.

“It is important to note that this coin was already identified as an altered piece back in 1905, by Henry and S. Hudson Chapman in their catalog of the Charles Morris sale.”

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Charles Link, MD
Private Collector

"I think it's pretty cool that you and your fellow researchers have confirmed and expanded upon what was described about one hundred years ago with extensive modern methods."

Andy Lustig
Professional Numismatic Dealer and Collector

"The report leaves no doubt in my mind that the silver plug in the Morris J-1 is not original and has been imperfectly engraved in an attempt to pass it off as "the real deal".

"What remains to be proved, if possible, is whether the coin left the Mint as a J-1, J-1a, or J-2. My best guess is that it left the Mint as a J-1a. The argument against that is that the position of the plug on the Morris coin is too low compared to the plugs on all J-1's. But when considering that the position of the hole on the unique J-1a appears to be too high, I have to suspect that both the J-1a and the Morris piece were rejected in mid-production, before the insertion of the silver plugs, because the holes were misplaced.

"Thanks for keeping me posted on your work, and congrats!"

Christopher R. McDowell
Early American Coinage Expert and Author

"I have at your request reviewed the paper that you, Robert Rodriguez, Tony Lopez, and Maureen Levine prepared dated June 20, 2019 and titled "1792 Silver and Non-Silver Center Cents: Further Studies of the Silver Plug Contained in the Morris So-Called Silver Center Cent." You asked me to look at the paper and provide you with a quote you could use publicly concerning the validity of your findings. I understood from your email to me, and further understand after reading the paper itself, that the goal is to convince PCGS and CAC to change their assessment of this coin, to wit: PCGS: 11001.61/13428095, which is slabbed as an authentic 1792 Silver Center Cent, Judd 1, MS61BN.

"I informed you that I would do as you requested, but only on the condition that if I disagreed with your conclusions you would provide my opinion to PCGS. You agreed with this condition. I also asked you if you required that I only reach my conclusion based on the information contained within the 4-corners of your paper or if I could examine and consider outside material. You indicated to me that I could look at outside material, which I did. In addition to the information you provided, I looked up images of 1792 Judd-1 coins. Although images of these coins were already provided in your paper, I looked at the images on my own and enlarged them on my computer to validate for myself certain information in the paper. This included looking at an image of the coin in question from a Stack's Sale in which the coin "Passed" - lot 10003, Stack's, Baltimore 2017. I inspected this coin in Baltimore in 2017, but wanted to refresh my recollection, so I looked at it again on line. I have also personally examined other Judd-1 coins, including the Newman coin - I was sitting in the 3rd row when that coin was auctioned. I previously conducted extensive research relating to this coin when I was looking into Bob Birch a few years ago, but have not followed the current controversy.

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"I do not own one of these coins. I have no financial interest in this matter and do not know the current owner of the Morris piece (or if I know the owner, I don't know he owns this piece). I received no compensation for my opinion set forth below. Finally, I do not know the authors of the paper and I do not know the identity of the person(s) at PCGS who authenticated the coin in question. I have authored books and articles in the area of early American numismatics. I have conducted extensive research into the early United States Mint - including the employees, technology, tools, and equipment used by the Mint in 1792. The opinion below is my own personal opinion and not necessarily the opinion of any organization to which I may be affiliated.

"I did not find Exhibits 1 or 2, (Plug Position) alone to be compelling evidence concerning authenticity. I agree that the position of the plug on the Morris example is an outlier; however, I think that this could be explained in many ways. I note that no two plugs are in the exact same location. As the hole was drilled by hand, human error is to be expected. At the same time, the difference in the plug position is a valid factor to consider along with other evidence when determining authenticity. I do question the location of the plug as it appears to have been selected so as to include as little hair detail as possible; therefore, requiring the smallest amount of engraving work.

"I found Exhibit 3 to be compelling evidence that the Morris example is not authentic. That is, the plug is not authentic - the copper portion of the coin is authentic. I see no legitimate reason why the curl in the hair on the plug would not be the exact same as the hair detail, *i.e.*, curl, on all the other coins of this variety if struck from the same die as the others. This also holds true for the reverse shown in Exhibit 5, which demonstrates that the base of the "E" in CENT on the plug is different from all other examples. I strongly agree with the information in Exhibit 6, to wit: the area within the silver plug is engraved, not struck. The photographic evidence is overwhelming. If the coin was struck with the silver plug and the design created by a die strike, it is a different variety from all others and unique - this, however, is not the case. The odds that the die would be re-engraved or altered and the changes only occur within the area of this small silver plug, but be exactly the same everywhere else, are astronomical and beyond any reasonable probability.

"I also believe that Walter Breen and John Ford, two people whose credibility has come into question as of late, misattributed the provenance of the 1974 G.E.N.A. sale coin. Whether this was done intentionally or in error, cannot be determined. I note that in Stack's 2017 catalog of the Morris piece, the 1974 G.E.N.A. sale is included in the provenance as well as the 1905 Morris sale.

"A question arose in my mind that the coin could have started life as an authentic Judd-1, but the plug fell out or was never there (Judd-1a) or was removed, and a prior owner replaced the missing plug with a new or different silver plug and had it engraved to look authentic. This is where Exhibits 1 and 2, showing the plug is in a different location from all other pieces, caused me to return to the belief that this is not the case and the hole and plug is much more likely to be a 19th century fabrication. If an authentic plug was originally part of the coin, I would expect it to have been larger in diameter than the current plug, but, because there is no evidence on the surface of this piece indicating that a larger diameter plug fell out or was removed, I do not believe this occurred. The theory that a coin like this would be engraved at the mint - that is the coin was struck and then plugged and the plug then engraved is improbable. There is no historical evidence to support this hypothetical scenario.

"I discussed this matter with a person who backs the coin's authenticity on the condition

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that I would not reveal his name. The only argument that was made to me that in any way seemed reasonable was that if the plug was added later, we do not know when it was added. The person argued that it could have been added in 1792. It is accurate to say that we do not know when the plug was added other than, in my opinion, it was not added before the coin was struck. Is it possible it was added in 1792? I do not believe it was, but there is no way to know for sure. When, where or why it was added, no one knows.

“Based on the information contained in the June 20, 2019, research paper, plus my own observations and investigation, it is my opinion that the Morris 1792 silver center cent is not authentic. The silver plug is spurious and was added after the coin was struck by some unknown person for some unknown reason at some unknown time. The most likely reason why this coin was altered is in order to deceive collectors, but there are other less likely possibilities. You are to be commended on an excellent paper. In my opinion, the views expressed in the paper are accurate.”

Douglas Mudd

Numismatic Researcher

“The team of Robert Rodriguez, Tony Lopez, Stuart Levine, and Maureen Levine have done an excellent job of researching this subject - starting with recognizing that there was a difference in the Morris specimen and going beyond to try to discover why the difference exists. Their argument fits the facts and has added additional information to our understanding of the series.”

Neil Musante

Numismatic Author

“This study has done a great service to Numismatics by correcting an egregious and obvious error. I find it disheartening that one of the third party grading services is unwilling to acknowledge its mistake in attributing the coin as authentic. What is heartening is that we have such research advocates willing to go to great lengths to protect us. Thank you all for this great work!”

Joel J. Orosz

Distinguished Professor of Philanthropic Studies Emeritus, Grand Valley State University

“At least since S. Hudson and Henry Chapman in 1905, dealers, collectors and scholars have noted that the Morris specimen of the 1792 silver center cent is unlike every other example of this coin. Now, Robert Rodriguez, Tony Lopez, Stuart Levine, and Maureen Levine have, through meticulous research and closely-reasoned argument, explained its outlier status, concluding that the coin itself is a genuine Judd 2, struck in the first United States Mint, but that the silver plug was added afterwards, outside of the Mint. The authors are to be commended for establishing the true nature of the Morris specimen, and for refining our understanding of the 1792 coinage.”

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James P. Rosen (quote added August 25, 2019)

Collector of Early American Coins and Immediate Past President of the Colonial Coin Collectors Club

“The research conclusions that Robert Rodriguez, Tony Lopez, and Stuart and Maureen Levine produced in their June 20, 2019 research paper on the Morris specimen only reinforced unequivocally to me that the Morris specimen is clearly a bogus Judd-1 that was made from a genuine Judd-2. While lot viewing this coin just prior to the November 2017 Stack’sBowers auction, I was very fortunate to be able to compare it to a raw genuine Judd-1, over a velvet pad, courtesy of Alan Weinberg. After spending a considerable amount of time examining these two coins closely, I was 100% convinced that the Morris specimen’s silver plug is clearly not a US mint made product, but rather a fabrication, most likely made to either fill a hole in a special collector’s cabinet or to deceive the general collector community. How fortunate I was to be able to examine both coins side by side since this conspicuously revealed to me that the Morris specimen’s letter E in CENT is completely different from that of the Weinberg specimen and every other known genuine Judd-1, thus confirming that the E in the Morris specimen was engraved after the coin was struck. Furthermore, inspection and comparison of the obverse hair curl revealed that its shape and position was absolutely different from all known specimens again reinforcing my view that this piece is a non mint made fabricated Judd-1. Now with this superb research paper and the 1905 Chapman brothers cataloguing of this piece along with my personal examination of it, it is time for PCGS to do the right thing and reverse its position and to decertify it as a genuine Judd-1.”

Saul Teichman

Editor of <http://uspatterns.com>

“Your analysis confirms what the Chapman brothers knew a 100 years ago. The reengraving is more obvious after looking at your enlargements. I have already updated the uspatterns.com website accordingly for that piece, placing that coin under Judd-2.”

Anthony Terranova

Professional Numismatic Dealer and Collector

“Your study: very compelling and most likely correct.”

Alan V. Weinberg

Private collector for 60 years and past owner of choice Judd-1

“I’ve owned and studied the Judd 1 1792 silver center cent for decades and there is no doubt in my mind, as it was with the Chapman Brothers in 1905 when they said so, that the Morris Judd 1 has a bogus, post-striking inserted and erroneously engraved silver plug that is off-center and does not match any other silver plug. And anyone who says the coin is perfectly genuine is being disingenuous for any number of reasons.”

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Responses from PCGS

From: Brett Charville <brett@collectors.com>
Date: May 21, 2019 at 10:12:53 AM PDT
To: ROBERT RODRIGUEZ <roblou270@aol.com>
Cc: Joe Orlando <JOrlando@collectors.com>
Subject: RE: Setting up a call/meeting—Rodriguez, Re: 1792 Morris Silver Center Cent, Important.

Rob,

Thanks for reaching out, most of my career I've been mostly a wholesale coin dealer so it has been nice to meet more collectors over the last few months. I believe you attended our FUN Luncheon in January but we didn't get a chance to speak directly there.

Before I started at PCGS in January I happened to receive from a dealer friend a copy of what I believe was the most recent copy of your paper at that time. Since then I've also had the opportunity to review research and fact finding PCGS has done on this matter as well.

If you'd like to share your additional or final report with us we're happy to take a look, but we don't see the additional benefit of having a call or meeting on this matter. As you are well aware 1792 was a transformative year for our nation's fledgling mint. Variance among pattern coinage, especially early patterns is not unusual and we do not believe the findings you've presented go beyond circumstantial and speculative.

Additionally, we've no interest in turning this into a public sparring match. If you choose to publish your paper in any forums that you see fit I completely understand, but you'll find this a rather one-sided battle as we've no interest in helping provide a platform for speculation. My own personal interpretation is that at a certain point some involved in this have become so intent on making what they consider a significant numismatic discovery that they've let theory and conjecture stand in for facts.

Best,
Brett

From: Brett Charville <brett@collectors.com>
Date: August 2, 2019 at 10:45:06 PM PDT
To: "roblou270@aol.com" <roblou270@aol.com>
Cc: Joe Orlando <JOrlando@collectors.com>
Subject: RE: Request for a meeting — Robert Rodriguez

Good Evening Rob,

Again, our opinion is unchanged on the status of the Morris Judd 1. I've seen nothing in you and Stu's "research" that changes the opinion PCGS rendered on this piece both at the time when it was graded, and again when it was reviewed in regard to this particular matter over a year ago.

We're always willing to take a look at any additional new information you may want to put forward, but we do not need to meet in person on this matter.

Thanks,
Brett